



Volume 1  
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# ***ONE HEALTH NEWSLETTER***

## **“Improving Quality of Life through One Health”**

### **Welcome: One Health National Coordinator**

**Joseph Anderson Bunting-Graden** is a Sierra Leonean and married with kids. He is the National One Health Technical Coordinator of the Directorate of Health Security and Emergencies (DHSE) under the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), Sierra Leone. He holds a Bachelor of Science (Honors) in Botany from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, a Post-Graduate Diploma in Public Administration from the Institute of Public Administration and Management, University of Sierra Leone and a Masters of Public Health Disaster Management from the Makerere University, Uganda. He also holds certificates in Public Health in Complex Emergencies and Humanitarian and Disaster Resilience Leadership.

Mr. Bunting-Graden has undergone trainings in research and publishing, emergency logistics management, leadership in disaster management, disaster preparedness and response, national information management, information technology skills. He is also a Fellow of the One Health Central and East Africa (OHCEA) Fellowship.



Mr. Bunting-Graden has served in various capacities, from Assistant Director, Disaster Response in the Disaster Management Department at the Office of National Security (ONS), to ONS Team Lead at the National Ebola Response Coordinator (NERC). He has served in the Eastern Region as the Chairman, Ebola Task Force, Kenema District, Provincial Security/Disaster Management Coordinator and Research Officer for the Joint Assessment Team, ONS.



**Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Environment  
Protection Agency**

#### **Inside this issue**

<b>Welcome: New One Health National Coordinator</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Updates and Success Stories</b>	<b>2-6</b>
<b>Photo News</b>	<b>7</b>

## Updates and Success Stories

### One Health Day Celebration/ Launch of Dog Bites and Rabies Campaign

November 3<sup>rd</sup> is International One Health Day. It is a day to raise awareness and generate discussion around One Health—the concept that the health of people, animals, and the environment are inextricably linked. Sierra Leone celebrated the day on Saturday, November 9, 2019, with a national celebration held in Kenema and district-level events across the country. While the day served as an opportunity to reflect on the progress Sierra Leone has made since launching the One Health platform in 2017, the focus of the day was on the launch of the national communication campaign to prevent dog bites and rabies. Rabies, a fatal disease where over 99% of human cases are caused by the bite of a rabid dog, is the second highest ranked zoonotic disease (i.e. diseases that spread from animals to people) of national concern in Sierra Leone.



The campaign launch included a presentation on the objectives of the campaign, its key promoted behaviors, and the communication materials developed. Representatives from across the One Health platform attended, including MoHS, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), Environment Protection Agency (EPA), ONS, chiefs, councils, religious leaders, traditional healers, police, media, and others. Mr. Sorie Kamara, Deputy Director of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, officially launched the campaign. The launch kicked off a flurry of activities across the country to engage the intended audiences on the campaign's key messages and promoted behaviors. Activities included a road show using a video truck, the airing of radio jingles on 20 community radio stations, orientating over 1,300 in-charges from government health facilities, a U Report poll, training of Red Cross volunteers for community engagement, and a three-day outreach on the ferries that travel between Freetown and Lungi before the holidays.

Want the campaign song, jingles, and poster? Send a WhatsApp message to **034 485 567**.

### One Health Sensitization for District-Level Stakeholders

World Health Organization (WHO) – Sierra Leone held a four-day One Health sensitization with special focus on COVID-19 at the Golden Tulip Hotel Aberdeen. The training brought together district-level stakeholders with three aims: 1) to create awareness of the One Health concept; 2) to promote collaboration among the various agencies at the district level, especially to be able to jointly conduct outbreak investigations; and 3) to create further linkages between human, animal and environmental agencies and their effects on disease occurrence.

Opening remarks were made by WHO and partners including United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Bank, MAF, EPA and MoHS. The expected learning objectives of this workshop were:

- 1) to apply One Health skills in outbreak investigation, control and response;
- 2) to apply One Health coordination and collaboration skills in managing public health emergencies at the district level.



The training was also cascaded for the Rapid Response Teams at the district level on the One Health approach to prevent and control COVID-19 in Sierra Leone. Presentations were made on: 1) surveillance for priority diseases conditions; 2) events in human, animal and environmental health; 3) international health regulations; 4) M&E framework; 5) the performance of veterinary services pathway; 6) the value of collaboration and team building; and 7) the role of risk communication and community engagement in One Health coordination. The sessions were interactive with lively discussions from participants.

### COVID –19 Preparedness and Response Efforts and Activities

On February 7, 2020, the Inter-Ministerial Committee held a meeting at the Public Health National Emergency Operations Center and was attended by Heads of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, including Representatives of State House, Parliament and key partners. The One Health Technical Coordinator, J.A. Bunting-Graden, called on the National One Health Platform to respond to the new public health emergency of international concern, citing that it had spread both international and domestic interest.



Following this meeting, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), through the MoHS under the DHSE, undertook several measures to mitigate COVID-19 risks to the country. The DHSE and One Health Risk Communication Team conducted several preparedness activities, including:

- ◆ Developing key messages for the general public and health care workers on the signs, symptoms and preventive measures for COVID-19
- ◆ Orienting stakeholders, including civil society organizations, religious leaders, journalists, traditional healers, petty traders, commercial transport associations, youth groups, and security personnel on these key messages
- ◆ Engaging border communities on the signs, symptoms and preventive measures for COVID-19
- ◆ Printing and distributing communication materials to key entry points
- ◆ Conducting media monitoring and identifying and responding to rumors and misinformation

With Sierra Leone confirming its first COVID-19 case on March 31, 2020, GoSL took prompt and effective action to reduce the spread of the virus in the country, including:

- ◆ Elevating the Emergency Operation Center from level one to level two
- ◆ Increasing in-country diagnostic capacity at three public health laboratory facilities using evidence-based quality assurance practices

The GoSL also announced the:



- ◆ Mandatory quarantine measures for passengers from high risk countries, which was later extended to all travelers coming into Sierra Leone from countries with local transmission of 50 cases of COVID-19.
- ◆ Declaration discouraging individuals from countries with 200 or more confirmed cases from travelling to Sierra Leone.
- ◆ Subsequent closure of all land and air borders in Sierra Leone.
- ◆ Declaration of two three-day lockdowns to help with contact tracing of confirmed cases. An inter-district travel restriction went into effect at the same time as the first lockdown.
- ◆ Declarations banning large gatherings of 100 people, enforcing face masks to be worn in public spaces, limiting the number of passengers in public transports to ensure social distancing, an inter-district lockdown and a 9:00pm to 6:00am curfew.

As cases increase, activities geared towards the reducing the spread of COVID-19 have been carried out around the country. Donors and partners have supported the response by providing funds and supporting programs and activities to ensure the public has access to information. These activities include:

- ◆ Continuous engagement with communities, stakeholders, the media, and partners to address rumors and misinformation.
- ◆ Engagement with various government ministries, departments and agencies on their role in the response, and orientation of health workers and other groups
- ◆ Establishment of the District Emergency Operations Center and command centers at district level
- ◆ Development and production of COVID-19 messages, materials and daily press briefing



## Updates and Success Stories

### Dog Bites and Rabies Campaign Orientations for National and District-Level Stakeholders

On October 17 and 18, 2019, in Bo and Makeni, respectively, the GoSL One Health communication team, supported by USAID-funded Breakthrough ACTION, oriented national- and district-level One Health representatives on the national communication campaign to prevent dog bites and rabies. The orientations brought together participants from the full gamut of the One Health platform – MoHS, MAF, EPA, ONS, MOE, district councils, religious leaders, police, paramount chiefs, universities, and others.

Research conducted by Breakthrough ACTION in Bombali District in 2018 shows correct knowledge around rabies is limited, including its causes, symptoms, prevention, and where to report exposure. In 2019, 1,561 dog and cat bites (majority from dogs) and 10 deaths from suspected rabies were reported through the MoHS disease surveillance system. Following potential exposure of rabies, vaccine and immunoglobulin if necessary should be given right away. Yet, human rabies vaccine and immunoglobulin are not widely available



or affordable for most in Sierra Leone. Once a person develops rabies symptoms, it is too late for treatment and they will not survive. This makes preventing dog bites and immediate care following a bite so crucial.

Based on the evidence available, the GoSL One Health communication team developed a communication campaign to increase awareness of the risks of dog bites and rabies, how to prevent dog bites, and what to do if bitten, as well as strengthen reporting of dog bites.



At the orientations, presentations touched on One Health, zoonotic diseases, surveillance data on dog bites in Sierra Leone, and information on dog bites and rabies including signs and symptoms in animals and people. These were followed by a deep dive into the campaign – its development process, objectives, audiences, key messages and materials by audience, and the recently established reporting pathways for dog bites and strange-acting dogs. Following the presentations, participants met in groups by their role (e.g. police, traditional healers) and discussed ways to disseminate the campaign's key messages and engage community members to adopt the promoted behaviors. Print materials were distributed to every district for further dissemination.

### Constituency Level Dialogue Meetings for Dog Bites and Rabies Campaign

According to WHO, 99% of human rabies cases reported worldwide result from dog bites. In Sierra Leone, in 2019, there have been 1,561 animal bites reported through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation's surveillance system, almost all of which are dog bites. Bombali District in the north of the country has the second highest number of reported dog bite cases following Bo District in the south. Noting that suspected rabies cases is endemic in many parts of Sierra Leone, the One Health Platform launched a communication campaign to increase awareness of the risk of dog bites and rabies, dog bites prevention and actions to take if bitten. The campaign also focused on strengthening reporting channels within and between sectors for improved surveillance and response to dog bites.

With information from Breakthrough ACTION's baseline research on dog bites and suspected rabies in 16 communities, the constituency level meetings started together with the launch of the campaign in selected communities in Bombali District with support from Breakthrough ACTION.

The aim of these constituency meetings is to engage community members in monthly dialogue about the campaign successes, gaps or challenges and recommendations for improving the campaign. The first meetings held was from the November 26– 29, 2019, for community participants to orient them to the campaign.

The second and third constituency - level dialogue meetings were held in January and February 2020, respectively. December meetings were skipped because of the festive season. During the meetings, participants were reminded about the key messages pertaining to prevention, reporting channels, and treatment of dog bites. Following a refresher on the campaign's key messages and promoted behaviors, the meetings focused on hearing updates, questions, concerns, and recommendations from participants. Paramount Chiefs and Chiefdom elders registered their commitments to help minimize dog bite and rabies cases.

## Updates and Success Stories

### Ferry Outreach for Dog Bites and Rabies Campaign

Among activities as part of the dog bites and rabies campaign, the One Health Communication Team (OHCT) held a three-day outreach on the ferries that run between Lungi and Freetown. The ferries were targeted because hundreds of people use the ferries everyday, especially just before the holidays in December when even more people are travelling. The objective of the outreach was to engage ferry riders in interactive discussions about dog bites and rabies prevention.

The outreach was held December 19-21, 2019. The OHCT was divided into two separate groups to board both ferries, with each group comprising of five members. Using a sound system, the campaign song and jingle were played to catch the attention of people onboard the ferry, after which introductions were made by the team and the purpose of the activity was explained. The team members then engaged in one-on-one conversations with individuals and collected feedback as well.. The OHCT left participants with the campaign WhatsApp number to encourage them to send the campaign a message to receive the campaign song, radio jingles, and poster.



### Lassa Fever Response in Tonkolili

A case of human to human Lassa fever was confirmed by MoHS in September, 2019 in Tonkolili District. Immediately following the confirmation, the District Emergency Operations Center was activated with the District Medical Officer as Incident Manager. The Risk Communication and Social Mobilization Pillar was quick to respond, mobilizing partners and implementing a Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices survey around Lassa fever for people living in the affected communities. As part of the response, over 200 Community Health Workers (CHWs) from the affected communities were oriented on Lassa fever prevention and deployed for two weeks to conduct door-to-door sensitization efforts in Sasaklah community in Kalansogoia chiefdom, and Masanga, Makonthandae and Mayorroh communities in Kafe Simira chiefdom, in Tonkolili District.



To better address rumors and misconceptions, CHWs set up information booths with hand washing stations in Masanga and Sasaklah.

District and community stakeholders from the affected and surrounding communities were engaged to ensure inclusion and ownership of the response by providing key preventive messages on Lassa fever for informed decisions and actions. Radio jingles and interactive radio discussions in local languages were aired in Tonkolili district. MoHS conducted Lassa fever press briefings for journalists at national and district level. The Lassa fever response was declared over in January 2020 and the District Emergency Operations Center was deactivated followed by an after-action review in Tonkolili District and at the national level.

Resources—contact MoHS Health Education Division for a copy



Facts about Lassa Fever



Lassa Fever—signs and symptoms

#### Websites for general information

<http://dhse.gov.sl>  
<http://mohs.gov.sl>  
<https://epa.gov.sl/>  
<http://www.maf.gov.sl/>

# Updates and Success Stories

## African Swine Fever Response

African swine fever (ASF) is a highly contagious hemorrhagic viral disease of domestic and wild pigs, which is responsible for serious economic and production losses. ASF is a disease listed in the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code and must be immediately reported by countries to OIE. ASF is transmitted through: direct contact with infected domestic or wild pigs; indirect contact, through ingestion of contaminated material (e.g. food waste, feed, or garbage); or biological vectors.

On September 20, and October 16, 2019, MAF and FAO received telephone calls from Moa Wharf and Kroo-bay communities on death of pigs. A joint team composed of epidemiologists from MAF and FAO were deployed to verify the claims from the farmers in the affected area. On the 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2019, MAF wrote an official letter to FAO for technical support to investigate the current outbreak.

Three teams comprising of officials from MAF, MoHS, University of Makeni (UNIMAK), Njala University, Center for Disease Control (CDC) African Field Epidemiology Network Intermediate students and FAO undertook a detailed epidemiological investigation and collected samples from pigs for laboratory confirmation. Investigation forms/questionnaires were used to capture epidemiological and laboratory data. Investigation teams visited infected and non-infected pig farms, collected samples from suspected cases, and conducted postmortem observations. The communities investigated included: Monkey Bush, Campbell Town, Samuel Town-Waterloo, Maburieh, Bengumah, Ibo Town, Bomeh-Waterloo, Bomeh/Kingtom, Kroo Bay, Susan Bay, Moa Wharf and Race Course - Cline town. Teams collected a total of 339 specimens, including whole blood, serum, oral swabs, nasal swabs, fecal samples, and organs. Specimens were collected in duplicates and transported to Central Veterinary Laboratory, Makeni for testing for ASF and to the University of Makeni for testing for swine flu and other zoonotic diseases. Samples were also sent to the FAO/OIE World Reference Laboratory for ASF Centro de Investigación en Sanidad Animal INIA-CISA in Madrid, Spain.



Findings estimated herd mortality in the sampled households and farms ranged from 0 to 99.4%. The mortality was highest in local communities within the Western Urban District compared to Western Rural District. Challenges highlighted were resistance by farmers in some communities, and the delayed response to the outbreak affected all communities as investigations were carried out about a month after the outbreak began which resulted in some of the pigs having already died or been sold.

The investigation and its findings led to the recommendation that in future outbreaks, the government should immediately notify OIE and the Regional Economic Communities to mitigate the impact of the outbreak. The recommendations also included that farmers should be trained on the implementation of bio-security practices, security personnel should be part of the team investigating outbreaks, and government should endeavor to provide feedback to farmers after collecting samples to improve compliance with investigations in the future.

## Know your Partners—Breakthrough ACTION

Breakthrough ACTION is an United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded social and behavior change global project led by John Hopkins Center for Communication Programs. In Sierra Leone, Breakthrough ACTION focuses on strengthening capacity of GoSL institutions on risk communication and the prevention and control of zoonotic disease and other public health threats. Breakthrough ACTION collected data to inform program interventions to coordinate, design, and implement communication for behavior change around zoonotic diseases.

James Fofanah, Chief of Party of Breakthrough ACTION Sierra Leone, says, “Breakthrough ACTION’s vision for One Health is to see sector ministries and partners develop and implement risk communication systems and approaches in a sustainable way such that Sierra Leone is always prepared and ready to respond to zoonotic diseases and other public health threats timely and effectively.”

As Breakthrough ACTION continues to work with other One Health partners, key activities will include but not be limited to providing on-going technical support to GoSL for COVID-19 response, implementation support to the dog bites and rabies campaign and strengthening capacity for One Health risk communication at district level.





## Photo Updates



**Workshop to Explore Prioritization of Prevention Behaviors of Zoonotic Diseases**



**Workshop to Explore Prioritization of Prevention Behaviors of Zoonotic Diseases**



**Constituency Level Dialogue Meetings for Prevention of Dog Bites and Rabies Campaign**



**Constituency Level Dialogue Meetings for Prevention of Dog Bites and Rabies Campaign**



**Orientation for Communication Campaign to Prevent Dog Bites and Rabies**



**Orientation for Communication Campaign to Prevent Dog Bites and Rabies**



### **The One Health Platform**

Ministry of Health and Sanitation  
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry  
Environment Protection Agency

**“Healthy People, Healthy Animals, Healthy Environment”**

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